

A decorative graphic in the top-left corner consisting of a light green square and a dark blue rounded rectangle.

INFORMAL CLAIMS

DEFINED

“An informal claim is any communication or action indicating an intent to apply for one or more benefits administered by the DVA. It may come from the claimant, the POA, an authorized representative, a Member of Congress, or some person acting as next friend of the claimant....”

“COMMUNICATION

- Can be a written statement
- Can be a phone call to VA
- Can be on a VA form or not
- Can be signed or unsigned

WHY FILE AN INFORMAL CLAIM

Informal claims are an opportunity for the claimant to establish:

- the intent to file a claim for VA benefits
- an effective date for receipt of benefits

The claimant “buys” time to finalize the claim.

REQUIREMENTS FOR AN INFORMAL CLAIM

- Must identify the benefit being sought.
- Must contain enough information to identify the claimant as a veteran.
- Cannot be submitted by VSO unless POA is on file.
- If submitted by guardian, must include court documents proving claimant is incompetent.

CIVILIAN POWER OF ATTORNEY

Generally, not recognized by VA. Nuff said.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Have the claimant sign the informal claim.
- Make sure the benefit being sought is well defined.
- Create some sort of tracking system
- Follow up
- Follow up
- Follow up

FULLY DEVELOPED CLAIMS

- You can do an informal and then do an FDC.
- Informal MUST stipulate that the claimant intends to submit the claim as a Fully Developed Claim.
- WHY???? Possibility of higher retroactive benefits under special DVA program.